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Hindus run a mosque.

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Uday Mahurkar

er 15, 1987 | UPDATED 12:10 IST

en kilometres from the communal tinder-box that is Ahmedabad, lies an oasis of nal tranquillity.

What makes the village of Pirana (population: about 800) special is that the years of bad blood in the neighbouring city haven't touched its residents. The bond that ties the people of Pirana is the 15th century mausoleum of a Muslim saint which is managed by Hindus.

Historical documents suggest that Sayyed Imamuddin Abdur-Rahim - better known as Imamshah Baba - came to this area in 1449 from Sindh, after his father's death, to preach the tenets of an order that came to be known as Satpanth dharma (the religion of truth).

So impressed were villagers by his spiritual prowess that apart from Muslims - who now make up half the population - Patels, Kolisand even Brahmins from nearby areas came to regard him as their beacon. Before taking samadhi in 1513, he selected Sanabhai, a Patel, to discharge religious functions. Ever since, the sect leader has always been a Patel. They are called Kaka and live and die bachelors.

Says Karsan Kaka, 45, the 22nd head of the sect: "According to the Baba, God could be attained through various paths. It did not require someone to change his religion." According to Karsan Kaka, in deference to his Hindu followers the Baba gave up eating meat and advised Muslims not to come to the mausoleum after eating meat either.

This tradition persists. Muslim residents don't eat meat within village limits and many of them are actually vegetarians. Not surprisingly, a number of tales are woven around Imamshah Baba's life and powers.

Viewed from outside, it is a typical Sufi saint's mausoleum - humble in appearance but

The doors, pillars and panels of the sanctum sanctorum, however, carry richly engraved platings. And the domes are tipped with gold. The dargah of Shaikh Abdul Rahim Mirza Baig, a revered follower of the Baba, lies just opposite the mausoleum's entrance.

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This is false news report. The author seems to be a victim of "taqiyya".
He probably was unaware of the outwardly adopted hindu identity of these muslims who run this mosque.

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Hindus run a mosque.

Uday Mahurkar
November 15, 1987 | UPDATED 12:10 IST

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The Pirana mausoleum: Carrying on unique traditions

The mixture of people who make up the faith and the religious practices that are followed must be among the most curious in the country. Amongst Imamshah Baba's disciples are a large number of Patels from Kutch who walk the long way to Pirana every May to attend a popular fair held in the Baba's memory.

Another fair, held every year on the 25th day of Ramzan - to mark the death of Imamshah -also attracts a large number of Muslims and Hindus. Around Rs 15-lakh donated by followers to the trust that looks after the mausoleum, are used for maintenance and to run a free kitchen all the year round.

At the mausoleum, Hindus and Muslims line upon both sides of the entrance, chanting
"Pirshah, Pirshah". Staunch Muslims use oil to light a lamp but the "Akhand Jyoti" (eternal flame), which is said never to have been extinguished since the Baba died, is sustained on ghee, in Hindu tradition.

Sadhus, who practise the faith, live in an adjoining dharamshala, wear saffron turbans, carry out puja at the mausoleum and distribute prasad in typically Hindu fashion.

Above everything else, it is Karsan Kaka's chamber that reflects the extraordinary secular ideals of this sect. On one wall hangs a portrait of Hazrat Alisaheb. Imamshah Baba's father, and on the other is an image of the Hindu goddess Gayatrimata.

Local residents are aware of the special place they occupy in a region torn by communal hatred and where suspicion and distrust are key words in the art of survival. Says Bakshi Ali Sayyed, 52, a Pirana resident: "We owe it all to the Baba who spread his gospel of truth and love."

Adds 54-year-old Balwant Singh, a Rajput: "Nowhere in the world is there a place like our village." It is no idle boast. Little, traditional Pirana could in any case teach modern Ahmedabad a thing or two.

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